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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 001901

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SA/INS
LONDON FOR POL - RIEDEL

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [NP](#) [GON](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL: ALL-PARTY CONSENSUS TO POSTPONE ELECTIONS

REF: A. (A) KATHMANDU 1811

[B.](#) (B) KATHMANDU 1781

[C.](#) (C) KATHMANDU 1772

Classified By: AMB. MICHAEL E. MALINOWSKI. REASON: 1.5 (B,D).

[1.](#) (C) Summary: On September 29 an all-party meeting recommended that national parliamentary elections, originally scheduled to begin November 13, be postponed. The recommendation--reached just one day after the Election Commission finally announced the long-awaited schedule for the polls--was made after the parties reached a consensus that the deteriorating security situation warrants postponing the elections. A Cabinet meeting September 30 decided that the Government should discuss a possible new date for polls and the make-up of a suggested all-party government with political party leaders. If the Prime Minister decides to take the recommendation to the King, the decision would give the monarch the all-party, public consensus he required before invoking his Constitutional authority to postpone the polls (Ref B). End summary.

[2.](#) (SBU) On September 29 an all-party meeting at the residence of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba recommended that the Prime Minister ask King Gyanendra to postpone mid-term parliamentary elections, originally scheduled to begin November 13, because of the uncertain security environment. The meeting proposed that a new interim all-party government, with representation from each party in the former Parliament, be formed until elections can take place. The meeting did not address fixing a date for the deferred elections. A Cabinet meeting September 30 decided that the Government should continue discussion of the matter, including a time-frame for the deferred election and the make-up of an interim government, with political party leaders.

[3.](#) (SBU) Hom Nath Dahal, a former MP and now spokesman for PM Deuba's newly formed Nepali Congress (Democratic) Party (Ref A), said that the PM and his party were the only participants in the meeting urging that elections take place as scheduled. When it became apparent, however, that the other parties were strongly in favor of postponement, the NC (Democratic) had to go along with the consensus, Dahal said. He suggested that the new interim all-party government would likely be headed by Deuba.

[4.](#) (U) The decision to postpone elections comes just one day after the Election Commission finally announced a schedule--pending since the dissolution of Parliament May 22--for phased polling throughout the country. The Election Commission timetable called for polling to occur in six discrete phases, extending from November 13 to January 10. Filing of candidacies was to have begun October 5.

[5.](#) (C) Despite the all-party consensus, there are a few voices of dissension. Former MP Narayan Singh Pun, who left the Nepali Congress to form his own political party to contest the November elections (and thus did not attend the September 29 meeting), complained that postponing the polls in response to Maoist terrorism amounts to an admission of defeat by the Government. We are ceding the ground to the Maosits and letting them win, he argued. If the mainstream political parties show they are too afraid to campaign and shut themselves up in Kathmandu, the Maoists will fill the vacuum left in the districts and become stronger, rather than weaker, in the interim until elections, he predicted. He expressed great disappointment with his political colleagues' timidity, adding that no one will ever be able to guarantee an environment of complete safety--even six months or one year from now--for elections. He said that many of his former party workers when he was in the Nepali Congress have become so disenchanted that they have joined the Maoists.

[6.](#) (C) Comment: Although few people we have talked to over the past six weeks expected the elections to proceed as scheduled, no political leader seemed willing to say so in public. As long as the Election Commission delayed publishing the schedule--and as long as no one had to file for candidacy and show up in any potentially dangerous constituencies--the various parties seemed willing to continue the increasingly implausible charade that voting would take place on November 13. But less than 24 hours

after the long-delayed schedule was finally announced, the leaders of seven different parties had hammered out, in uncharacteristically short order, a consensus that they didn't want to have the elections after all. Whatever its timing, the recommendation seems to fulfill the two conditions for a request for royal intervention--that it arise from consensus and be made in public--that King Gyanendra had stipulated he was looking for before invoking his constitutional authority to postpone elections (Ref A). We expect the Prime Minister will forward the request to the King--along with his own recommendations for the composition of a caretaker government--soon.

MALINOWSKI